



The Board's Vision: A healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystem for the benefit of present and future generations.

## Mackenzie River Basin Board Secretariat

### Mackenzie River Basin Board Meeting No. 71

Date: May 5 2022

#### Attendees

Nadine Stiller (chair)	Government Member	ECCC
Heather Jirousek	Government Member	Yukon
Ted Zimmerman	Government Member	British Columbia
Andrew Wilson	Government Member	Alberta
Carmen de la Chevrotière	Alternate Member	Alberta
Patrick Cherneski	Alternate Member	ECCC
Nicholas Mitchell	Alternate Member	CIRNAC
Nathen Richea	Alternate Member	Northwest Territories
Lana Lowe	Indigenous Member	British Columbia
Thon Phommavong	Government Member	Saskatchewan

#### Secretariat

Paula Siwik	Executive Director	ECCC
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#### Guests

Meghan Beveridge		Northwest Territories
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#### **71.1 Welcome and Agenda**

*Motion to approve the agenda for May 5 2022 with one noted change which is that a motion to approve the minutes of meeting 69 and 70 will be tabled at Meeting 72 (A. Wilson, T. Zimmerman; passed).*

#### **71.2 Membership**

- Welcome to Thon Phommavong. Thon has been involved in water management in Saskatchewan for 30 years and has been serving as an Acting VP of Regulatory Services at the Water Security Agency since February. Prior to joining WSA, he was a member of the Ministry of Environment's Senior Management Team and was accountable for several transformational changes that included outcomes-based regulatory initiatives, change management, compliance audit, and IM/IT transformation. Thon served as a member of the International Souris River Board and participated on the CCME.
- Title for C de la Chevrotière has changed and will be updated for Meeting 72.

#### **71.3 Approval of Minutes**

Approval of the minutes for Meetings 69 and 70 are deferred to Meeting 72.

#### **71.4 Action Items not Addressed Elsewhere in Meeting 71**

- One item of note is that Notable item 69.9: S. Bartnik (ECCC) has replaced S. Reedyk (retired) as chair of the Water Quality Task Team.

#### **71.5 September Meeting Location and Agenda**

- The MRBB plans to have an in person meeting in the basin this September 2022 as a way to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Master Agreement. The locations under consideration are Fort Smith, Fort St. John and Hinton.
- MRBB members voted. The MRBB will meet in Fort Smith/Smiths Landing in September.

#### **71.6 Notifications Project (Information)**

- The topic of non-emergency spills and deposits and how they are managed in the basin was raised at Meeting 65. A draft high-level summary product is included in the meeting package. This product could be shared on the public side of the MRBB website.
- MRBB members will need to discuss how and where we house this. P. Siwik will brand it and change out the word “regulator”. This action item has been more of an investment than anticipated.
- This item will be revisited.

#### **71.7 Plan to advance interim Strategic Plan**

- Feedback on April 22 webinar with the authors of “Towards Reconciliation: 10 calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada.”, and the list of potential speakers.
- [Towards reconciliation: 10 Calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada \(facetsjournal.com\)](https://www.facetsjournal.com)
- MRBB members found the presentation meaningful, timely and on point. Reconciliation has been a focus for the MRBB and the presentation resonated. Members would have appreciated more time to understand the actions not covered in the presentation.
- The content of the paper is applicable to the MRBB technical committees.
- Information on contracts that could support MRBB members in advancing work on the interim Strategic Plan. Intent is to share information.
- There are four priority areas of focus in the interim Strategic Plan. The SOAER and Indigenous Knowledge priorities are currently being advanced through the contract with Tracking Change to identify information that can enhance Indigenous Knowledge on the 2021 SOAER. The ideas shared today supports the “Role and cope of the Secretariat” priority and the “Reconciliation and evolution of working relationships” priority.
- Role and scope of Secretariat priority: Contract that will result in a) the development of 10 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), b) a review of the meeting minutes to identify any approved by-laws that may not have been captured in the by-laws currently in use and c) an operational reference manual and perpetual planning calendar.
- Reconciliation and the evolution of working relationships priority: the contract work proposed to advance this priority in 2022-23 intend to a) promote a shared understanding at the MRBB table of the context in which MRBB members work and live,

b) provide a foundation for subsequent discussion/workshop about reconciliation at the MRBB table and a review of the nine goals.

- **Contract #1: Background Material on Indigenous Peoples and the Cultural Importance of Water in the Mackenzie River Basin:** Result will be validated background materials on Indigenous peoples in the Mackenzie River Basin and the cultural importance of water. Information will enhance existing products (e.g. MRBB website, Annual Report, member orientation package, etc.).
- **Contract #2: Advancing an Understanding of the Current Water Governance Landscape in the Mackenzie River Basin.** MRBB members operate in a landscape with multiple governance approaches. This contract would result in a plain language background report on the current water governance landscape in the Mackenzie River Basin and include a section on recent decisions/practises from other parts of Canada that support reconciliation.
- **Contract #3: Report and Workshop to Advance Reconciliation at the Mackenzie River Basin Board Table:** Preparation of a background report to support a discussion on reconciliation for the MRBB. The background report should assist the MRBB to build a common understanding of reconciliation, identify where reconciliation efforts are already underway and support a discussion on how reconciliation can be advanced in the work of the MRBB. The idea is start this contract once work on the previous two contracts is well underway.
- The workshop component will focus on a review of the MRBB goals through the lens of reconciliation, and on practical recommendations on how to advance the work of reconciliation at the Board table.
- There was general support for the work proposed. MRBB members will have more detailed discussions at future meetings.

#### **71.8 Options to enhance the Secretariat**

- Information on how temporary employees have supported the MRBB Secretariat in recent years and HR tools available that support staffing for one-year determinate positions was shared with MRBB members. The 2022-23 budget includes funds to support a student and/or casual employee.
- Students and casuals work for ECCC for between 4 to 8 months. These individuals add capacity, bring a new perspective, and ask good questions that contribute to the overall quality of the work. Time is required to hire and train them.
- ECCC has a number of HR staffing tools that can be used to staff for up to a year. A one-year position would support on work that requires continuity, and relieves the time required to continually hire and train new staff. The Interchange Canada Program is an opportunity for the MRBB to foster capacity, increase exposure, and learn from other organizations through one-year assignments.
- The 2022-23 budget also includes a contract for up to 50 hours of coordination support for the TKSP committee. The proposed contract is a one-year sole source trial for both parties. This individual is uniquely suited to fill a coordination and support role on the TKSP committee. The contract includes time to support meeting preparation, facilitate

discussion, support to ED on action items, and reporting to the MRBB on committee activity.

- MRBB members support the idea of the one-year 50-hour contract that will provide additional coordination support for the TKSP committee. Discussion on a one-year full time position will continue once additional details on the proposed role are available.

#### **71.9 Finance**

- **2021-22 FY Report:** The focus of 2021-22 was on launching the SOAER and developing an interim Strategic Plan. Not a lot of expenses outside routine contracts (e.g. website hosting), Secretariat salary and participation fees for members.
- **2022-23 Proposed Budget:** Proposed budget includes routine contracts, a line item for salary for students and/or casuals. It also includes a budget for two hybrid in-person/virtual meetings, the contracts presented that advance the priority work of the MRBB, and money to support a 50 contract for additional TKSP coordination support.

*Motion to approve the budget excluding the three contracts still being discussed. (Background Material on Indigenous Peoples and the Cultural Importance of Water in the Mackenzie River Basin, Advancing an Understanding of the Current Water Governance Landscape in the Mackenzie River Basin and Report, and Workshop to Advance Reconciliation at the Mackenzie River Basin Board Table) (N. Richea, T. Zimmerman; passed).*

#### **71.10 June meeting**

- Most members plan to travel to the meeting in Edmonton in June. Some will participate via ZOOM.

#### **71.11 Roundtable**

- A tri-lateral meeting between BC, NWT and Yukon to discuss bilateral agreements will be held in Whitehorse.
- The government of BC continues to move ahead on developing a collaborative process in water management. The government has received a lot of feedback to date and plan to seek support to advance collaborative efforts with Indigenous partners. This work is being led by a brand new Ministry that is led by a new deputy.
- The nations in the Liard sub-basin have been meeting as a Liard regional sub-basin group for about a year now. The meetings are hosted by the First Nations Fisheries Council. The group is in the information sharing stage and discuss watershed security in the Liard basin.
- MRBB members are interested in having BC colleagues present to the MRBB on water co-management.
- Discussion and negotiations on bilateral agreements continue.
- Ice break up in the Peace Athabasca Delta is now viewable on rivers.ab.ca and the AB Rivers app .

**Goal 1: Evaluate the health of the whole basin**

**Goal 2: Investigate matters concerning the ecological health of the whole basin**

**Goal 3: Advocate for the maintenance and improvement of the ecological health of the whole basin**

**Goal 4. Educate the public, share information, and learn from others about matters concerning the ecological health of the whole basin**

**Goal 5. Support and facilitate the increased participation of Aboriginal Peoples in MRBB activities**

**Goal 6. Encourage the development and implementation of bilateral water management agreements**

**Goal 7. Ministers, Aboriginal leaders and appropriate staff of jurisdictions are informed of and engaged in MRBB activities**

**Goal 8. Information, knowledge and research are shared among jurisdictions – written reports**

**Goal 9. MRBB affairs are administered effectively.**